

South Rockford Target Plan

South Rockford . . .

An area rich in history and constantly changing its future.

This plan calls for the unifying of residents to accomplish the shared goals of its diverse population. Gone are the former roles of immigrant landing point, Italian stronghold, and steppingstone for past and future immigrant groups. Today, South Rockford finds itself beginning a new era for this historic region of the city. It is no longer a temporary stop for new immigrant families and minorities; South Rockford is ready for its new role in the region. South Rockford is becoming a long term community of investment by property owners. Homeownership is returning to South West Rockford as people see the true potential of the neighborhood. This plan sets the stage for not only the improvement of the community, but a strategy for neighborhood leaders to follow to take the area into the future.

An Action Plan Written by

SWIFTT



Produced by SWIFTT, a non-profit serving South Rockford and beyond.

Introduction

The South Main Target Area is bounded by the Rock River on the east, the rail yards to the north, Corbin and West Street on the west, and Marchesano to the south (see map on in appendix A). The target area is a very diverse area for the city of Rockford. Historically, South Rockford served as a point of arrival for many waves of ethnic groups as they entered our city for the first time. Low cost housing and the grouping of other members of their ethnicity attracted immigrants looking to get their start not only in Rockford but in the United States. For many, Rockford became a destination point as they entered the country.

Today, the area has a population of just under 2,500 people, with a little over half of which is Hispanic. African-Americans account for 33% of the population with 12% being Caucasian. Between the 1990 census and the 2000 census, both African American and Caucasian populations lost numbers to the rapidly increasing Hispanic population. In the past, the Target Area saw different ethnic groups lose ground to the newest ethnic group to enter Rockford. This change in the make up of the area is nothing new. However, what is new in the cycle of immigration for Rockford is that there is no new immigrant group on the horizon to change the now dominant Hispanic population within South Rockford. Nor is there any indication Rockford will see any new group of immigrants like they have had before. If a new immigrant group does enter into Rockford, it seems unlikely they will gravitate to South Rockford as other groups have done in the past.

In the past, manufacturing jobs made Rockford a likely destination for immigrant groups as they came to our country. Over the past two decades, the Rock River Valley has seen a significant decrease in such employment. This has made it less attractive for new arrivals to travel to Rockford. The other change has been the US government's reluctance to allow large groups of immigrants, or refugees, to come into our country as was common at different points in our country's history. Rockford still experiences immigration, but new ethnicities are few in number. New members of existing populations still arrive, but they blend quickly with the population and are not as noticeable.

The Target Area has a slightly higher proportion of children under the age of 18 (35%) than the City as a whole (27%). The senior population is decreasing as the number of children is on the rise. While the proportion of residents 65 and over dropped from 12% to 8% in the Target Area, it was virtually unchanged citywide going from 14.7% in 1990 to 14.1% in 2000. The end result of this shift is the area is a younger population than other areas of the city. More attention will have to be given to serving the young population while still serving the needs of the seniors.

The neighborhood housing units are occupied mostly by families (72%) with an average size of 3.75 people per family as compared to 3.09 for the City of Rockford as a whole. One in five households is headed by a single parent within the Target Area. With the large number of Hispanic families, half of all children in the target area speak Spanish on a regular basis. Only 9% of the Rockford children speak Spanish when looking city wide.

Although the median household income for the area has risen significantly with in the Target Area, from \$17,838 in 1989 to \$25,800 in 1999, it is still well behind the median household income for Rockford which was \$37, 667 in 1999. A staggering 32% of the residents are living below poverty levels in the Target Area, more than double the Citywide rate. Over one fourth (27%) of the population receives Social Security Income which becomes an interesting fact when only 9% of the population is elderly. Another interesting fact is that each category of residents; Hispanic, African Americans, and Caucasians earns less than their counterparts in other areas of the city. With the level of poverty indicated, an interesting decrease in the number of people receiving public aid has occurred from 1990 to 2000. The percentage of people receiving public aid has dropped from 18.5 to 6% in 2000. The conclusion is that the Target Area will have to strive to increase household income to improve poverty conditions.



The Process

In 2004, the City of Rockford took on the task of improving the South Main Street area. City staff began by hosting several meetings with residents and business owners. Alderman Victory Bell and Linda McNeely also became involved in promoting the idea of a comprehensive plan to their constituents. After the initial meetings, the City of Rockford entered into an agreement with SWIFTT, a nonprofit based within the targeted area, to produce a neighborhood plan.

SWIFTT began the planning process with a good understanding of the area. The organization has been based within the South Main Target Area since 1988. Using the knowledge of the organization, SWIFTT moved forward in the planning process.

The process started in the Spring of 2005 by laying out a general framework for the plan, identifying potential topics that impacted South Rockford. We then started to list out organizations and individuals that were related to these important topics such as housing and crime prevention. One-on-one interviews began in the spring and continued into the beginning of the summer.

We made efforts to make contact with the residents as we walked through the neighborhood in attempts to fully understand the target area. People talked about various issues, but took a stance that solutions were for other people to work on. We didn't find many who wanted to be involved in actively pursuing solutions. We found this to be an obstacle that would have to be addressed in our plan if future efforts were to take hold.

In the late summer and early Fall, SWIFTT launched a campaign of meetings on street corners spread out through the target area. We created informational handouts and separate invitations to these meetings in both English and Spanish languages. We used a system of flyering the area around the meeting locations two nights before the meetings, which were scheduled on week nights at 5:30 PM and some at 6:00 PM. These meetings had a mixed turnout with two being canceled due to inclement weather.

Residents who turned out showed more interest in getting involved than the random residents we encountered in the neighborhood. It became clear that the Cunningham area and the Mandeville Park South neighborhood were better represented. We will have to make more efforts in 2006 to recruit participation in the Mandeville Park North neighborhood. This area is heavily Hispanic and we knew going in it would be a more difficult area to recruit leaders due to the differences in culture.

We culminated our meeting effort with two area wide meetings at Booker Washington Community Center and St. Elizabeth Community Center. We marketed these meetings with the same method we used before by putting out bi-lingual flyers. We also contacted all the people who had already attended the smaller meetings. Our turnout at Booker Washington Center was fairly good, while our meeting at St. Elizabeth Center was disappointing. We presented elements of the plan at each meeting and received comments about what we had assembled.

We then started writing the plan in detail. The more difficult topics were the gang related crime mostly centered around the Cunningham Street Area and the unknown future of the Barber-Colman complex on South Main Street. The gang topic was obviously difficult due to many people's frustration and no clear solution. The unknown future of Barber-Colman left property owners in the area unclear if there would be a significant development to build off in the future or not. We made our best effort to address these issues and others into our plan.

With not enough identifiable leaders stepping forward to take on improving the area, we designed our plan to work through small committees that would be recruited in the first year. This process would help us utilize the few we can identify and build up others around them. SWIFTT would be the organization that would work at recruitment, training, and staffing of these committees.

Roger Sexton
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Institutions

1. St. Elizabeth Com. Center
2. Booker Washington Com. Center
3. Area Churches
4. King School
5. Washington School
6. Montague Library

Notable Features

1. River Front
2. New condominiums
3. Tinker Swiss Cottage
4. Ethnic Heritage Museum
5. South Main Business District
6. Graham-Ginestra House
7. Mandeville Park
8. Grays Grocery Store

Recent Public Improvements

1. Winnebago Rebuild
2. Illinois Avenue Rebuild
3. Cunningham Street rebuild
4. Montague Library Addition

Churches

1. New Zion Baptist Church
2. St. Peter and Paul Church
3. South Side C.O.G.I.C
4. Deliverance C.O.G.I.C.
5. West Side True Vine Baptist
6. St. Anthony
7. Providence Missionary Baptist
8. Miles Memorial CME

Neighborhood Strength Assessment

Summary of Strengths

This area has benefited from a wave of investment by Hispanic and African-American property owners. New siding and paint has brightened up the neighborhood, encouraging future home buyers. St. Elizabeth and Booker Washington Community Centers are valuable assets to the area with numerous programs for youth and elderly. Churches are seeking to connect to the community such as New Zion Church, which is reaching out to the neighborhood.

There are two areas of strong housing in the neighborhood that are notable: Knowlton and Illinois Avenues.. Although the houses are older on Illinois Ave., the block is well kept and the houses are a little more modern than other streets in the neighborhood.

The location of two schools in the area makes it attractive to families with young children. Furthermore, St. Elizabeth and Booker Washington Community Centers are playing an increasingly important role with various segments of the population.

The South Main Business district is a high traffic area that is waiting for the provision of more parking and/or the redevelopment of the Barber-Colman complex. The buildings in this area represent the highest density of businesses in the Target Area.

Recent street improvements spearheaded by 5th Ward Alderman Victory Bell and 13th Ward Alderman Linda McNeely are elevating the quality of the infrastructure for our area. Most notable are Winnebago and Cunningham Streets that have been recently rebuilt. Infrastructure improvements will be an asset as we attract investment to our area in the form of new houses or businesses.

New housing in the area is creating more confidence in the neighborhood. CCS, Inc. operates a YouthBuild program that recently completed three new houses on Church Street. A private builder has just completed two new houses in the same area during the past three years. Construction of new condominiums just to the south of the area also helps the confidence in the area.

Physical

1. Boarded up Deteriorated Housing
2. Poor infrastructure on certain streets.
3. Lack of property maintenance that preserves housing stock
4. Aging housing stock that requires more than cosmetic improvements.

General

1. Lack of identity
2. Unattractive business district
3. Quality of life
4. Failure to capture any benefits of the Rock River.
5. Perception of high crime in the area

Social Issues

1. Education level is significantly lower than other parts of the city.
2. There is a language/cultural barrier between the Hispanic population and other ethnic groups.
3. Lack of local neighborhood organizations.

Visual

1. Unattractive Commercial Districts.
2. Lack of identity that can be marketed both for residential and commercial property.
3. The presence of the vacant industrial property known as the Barber-Colman Factory.
4. Signs of Graffiti on buildings that gives an image of high crime.
5. Lack property maintenance that can easily be seen from the street.

Neighborhood Weakness Assessment

Summary of Weaknesses

This older area of the city has many small to medium size housing that has aged. Some have been renovated, while others have actually been replaced with new housing. The majority of houses are in need of private investment. Vacant lots detract from the neighborhood and lead to a build up of trash.

The vacant houses in the area detract from the image of the Target Area. Those that require improvement should be approached about city programs that could help them. Those houses that are too run down, should be demolished.

The lack of curb and gutter also holds the area back in many ways. Areas lacking this investment seem to be less attractive to visitors in the area. Those streets within the Target Area that have received curb and gutter appear in better position to attract private investment.

There is a lack of neighborhood organizations in the area. Block watches and other neighborhood based groups are needed in areas such as this. The future activity will require effective means of communication for what is happening and what the residents want. Isolation of residents has led to a lack of interaction that is key to building a strong neighborhood.

The public image of the area is also a problem. Outsiders have a low opinion of the area, seeing it as crime ridden and full of deteriorated housing. This deters people from moving into the area or visiting our local attractions. Area image is also a concern of the residents who live within the area. They avoid local businesses because of poor image or the presence of panhandlers. The residents who live in the area see it as an area that is neglected by city services. They hesitate to invest in their properties because although they don't have the same opinions as outsiders, they wonder which direction the neighborhood is headed. This curbs their interest to invest in improvements to their home.

Property maintenance is also a problem that affects the neighborhood. Long time residents speak of a lack of pride in property owners that was not the case in years gone by. Lack of attention to shrubbery, porch repair, peeling paint, and other factors reinforce the image of a lack of pride. Properties that display these problems detract from the well maintained properties.

South Main Street is the highest traffic arterial in the neighborhood. Although it carries high volumes of cars through the Target Area, the physical design of the area does not lend itself to encouraging people to stop and visit the stores on South Main. The appearance of the street is old and outdated. The corridor does not take advantage of any of the views of the river.

Opportunities

SWIFTT

Neighborhood Opportunities Assessment

Housing

1. Infill subdivision at Court & Loomis.
2. Housing renovation campaign
3. Infill housing at Winnebago and Cunningham.
4. Infill housing at Kent and Church.

Business

1. Reinvent South Main Business District through developing parking, façade program, and marketing.
2. Recreate a new business district on Cunningham.
3. Gray's Food Store has the potential to anchor an area of new retail development.

Infrastructure

1. Increase impact of new streets by rebuilding streets near Winnebago and Cunningham.
2. Continue to install curb and gutter to encourage home ownership.

Marketing

1. This area of SW Rockford would benefit from active marketing campaigns that would highlight the business districts and any new housing development.

General

1. Coordinated effort of community centers could lead to better quality of life for residents.
2. The City of Rockford has plans to redevelop the Barber-Colman manufacturing center into an asset for the community.

Summary of Opportunities

There are three large-scale public improvements slated for the target area that will have dramatic impacts and create new opportunities for the South Main Target Area. First is the widening and improving of South Main Street both within and outside of our target area. This will provide better access to the Downtown and to any new attractions in our target area. The Morgan Street Bridge project will also improve visitors access to our area from the east. These two projects will provide increased vehicle traffic through the target area.

An opportunity to create a major destination for visitors lies with the third public improvement project. The Barber-Colman complex has been recently studied and the past and current administrations have taken steps to achieve the redevelopment of the complex. Barber-Colman will be a large scale development, having a strong economic impact on local businesses and residents. Regardless of the end product, the area will benefit by the removal of the blighted grounds that are now attributed to the Barber-Colman complex.

The opportunities for the target area are to take advantage of developable space and create a new image for the area. The Barber-Colman complex is slated for major redevelopment. This future project will draw more attention to the area and may create a jump in the demand for attractive housing in the area. While capitalizing on this redevelopment, our area will see increased traffic with two large public improvement projects: Morgan Street Bridge and the widening of South Main Street.

With the construction of new housing and increasing levels of housing renovation already beginning, the improved economic conditions brought on by these major developments will lead to substantial changes in increased homeownership, small business start-up, and strong neighborhoods.

Crime

1. Gang Activity
2. Graffiti
3. Lack of trust of the police within the Hispanic and African-American Communities

Housing

1. Lack of investment by property owners could lead to a level of irreversible deterioration.
2. Lack of new housing may make the area uncompetitive with other areas of Rockford.

Infrastructure

1. Slow replacement of inferior streets could hinder future development and image of target area.
2. Lack of curb, gutter, and sidewalks present a poor image that hinders area marketability.

Social Services

1. Lack of funding could stifle the development of the social economic base of the neighborhood.
2. Lack of public awareness of nonprofits and agencies prevents the general public from knowing of their services.

Neighborhood Threats Assessment

Summary of Threats

The largest threats to our area are criminal activity and image. For the Target Area to rebound, efforts must be made to remove the presence of gangs and shootings in the area. These add to the negative public perception of the area and fill the residents with fear. Gangs are becoming increasingly attractive to young people as a way to attract the attention of their peers.

The public image of the area is decreased by the sight of boarded-up buildings, poorly maintained homes, and litter. Real progress must be made to address these factors if the area expects to reverse the downward trend of public perception.

Although Barber-Colman was mentioned in the opportunities section, it is currently a threat to the area due to the condition and appearance. With this large complex in a state of disrepair, the Barber-Colman complex sends a very loud message of blight to those visiting the neighborhood. With its location on the major thoroughfare, it continues to detract from efforts to improve the area.

Business

1. A lack of business district identity hinders marketing for our businesses.
2. Poor image of store fronts deter customers and hold back efforts to start or expand businesses.
3. With the reconstruction of the Morgan Street Bridge, the rear of buildings on South Main will be exposed, revealing an unattractive image.

Existing Businesses

1. Auto Repair
2. Restaurants
3. Liquor Stores
4. Bars
5. Light manufacturing
6. Retail
7. Tax Services
8. Pharmacy
9. Grocery Store
10. Funeral Home
11. Museums

Needed Services

1. Marketing media capable of penetrating the SW Rockford community
2. Business planning, marketing, and other assistance to new and existing businesses.
3. Fast access to financing for companies to bridge hard times or to take advantage of opportunities in the market.

Available Space

1. There is limited retail space available in the Marchesano and South Main Districts.
2. There is little to no space available for skilled trades or manufacturing type businesses.
3. Often the space available does not meet the needs of inquiring businesses

Neighborhood Business Assessment

Summary of Business Climate

There are three business districts within the Target Area: South Main, Marchesano, and Cunningham. The area also has a significant number of businesses spread out in the neighborhood. Some of these are visible, while others are home based businesses. These businesses are not large employers of people for the most part. Those few businesses who employ a considerable number of people are in danger of being relocated outside of the Target Area due to upcoming public improvements. The end result will be that the Target Area businesses will be mostly retail with a few service based businesses in the area.

All three business districts are in need of a better image. Only the Marchesano District has proper parking. South Main Street's parking is reliant on both the future plans for the former Barber-Colman site and Main Street Improvement project of the Illinois Department of Transportation. This lack of parking is holding back the desire of business owners to improve their business. They feel the lack of parking is strangling their potential to attract customers.

Cunningham Street has only three businesses currently. However if their needs of improving the image along Cunningham is addressed, there may be an increased demand for business space in this corridor. The largest attraction to this part of the Target Area is Maria's Restaurant that draws large crowds from all over the city.

The Target Area rests in the eastern portion of what is considered South Rockford. The Target Area is adjacent to the downtown area know as the River District. The area surrounding the plan area is mostly residential. With manufacturing and large employers scattered throughout South West Rockford. Outside of the Target Area, few retail opportunities exist in SW Rockford.

The current role for the Target Area is the provision of limited retail to the residents of South West Rockford as a whole. However, few stores are able to serve the needs of the population due to their small size. The lack of selection in most cases causes residents to take their retail spending to other areas of the city. Retail stores are left with a much smaller customer base, limiting their growth potential.

South Main

Description

South Main Street consists of approximately five blocks of commercial area, with the main elements consisting of a traditional zero-lot line retail district and a large scale grocery store. The remainder of the area is best described as low density land use with large areas of open area available for development.

The lack of parking in the area keeps property owners from improving their property. Their opinion is why invest more money in their business when they don't have enough parking for their customers now. The other weakness for the business district is the parking lot at the SE corner of South Main and Loomis. This lot is attracting criminal activity and littering. In the background is the undeveloped Barber-Colman Complex, which is unattractive to those visiting or passing by the businesses on South Main Street.

South Main Business District Goals

Goal 1: Create Committee for South Main

Quarter 1 2006 | Price: n/a | SWIFTT

Create a five person committee to oversee the objectives of the South Main Business District.

Goal 2: Parking area creation at SE corner of South Main and Loomis

Quarter 2 2006 | Price: \$45,000 | City of Rockford/ State of Illinois

A parking lot with capacity of thirty cars to serve the current businesses and the future businesses of the Barber-Colman Village will be created in 2006.

Goal 3: A façade program will be put in place for South Main Businesses

Quarter 2 2007 | Price: \$45,000 | City of Rockford/ State of Illinois

Once parking has been increased for the area, business owners should be assisted with public subsidy dollars to improve the exterior of their businesses.

Goal 4: Make the parking lots safe on South Main Street

Quarter 2 2007 | Price: Unknown | SWIFTT/ Rockford Police Department/Public Works

Make the parking areas safer by using techniques of better lighting, reorientation of entrances and window, and increased patrols.

Goal 5: Create a Special Service District for the South Main Business District to increase police Protection

Quarter 3 2007 | Price: \$100,000 | Business/property owners/ City Legal Dept. and SWIFTT

By raising funds in the South Main Business District, a police officer could be assigned specifically to the business district to decrease crime. Property owners would have to agree to paying an increase in property tax or user fees to pay for this added protection.

Goal 6: Create Identity for South Main

Quarter 3 2007 | Price: \$10,000 | City of Rockford/ local architect

Gather business owners to discuss what sort of image the South Main Business District should have. The image should encompass a name, façade improvement, event planning, and marketing.. They should work with an architect to create renderings of what they want.

Goal 7: Businesses should participate in joint promotion opportunities.

Quarter 3 2006 | Price: \$1,000 | South Main Businesses/ SWIFTT

Businesses should work together to promote the district as a whole. SWIFTT should create opportunities for business owners to accomplish this.

Marchesano

Description

This commercial area will need to meet the needs of the immediate population of South Rockford. If the South Main/ Barber-Colman area is to serve as a destination point to tourist and those looking for entertainment, then the Marchesano District will need to provide more everyday services. Currently, there exist a Hispanic grocery, a bakery, beauty supply, dollar store, a beautician, and a small urban clothing store. Vacancy is a big concern at this time.

This commercial area is hampered by the lack of visibility from South Main Street. With the improvement of South Main Street attracting larger volumes of traffic, it will become increasingly important to address this weakness. To address the visibility weakness, the commercial outbuilding and residential house on South Main Street should be removed. The building containing Englewood Beauty Supply should be extended out with additional retail space. This would open up the view of the entire Marchesano corridor, making it more inviting to traffic on South Main.

The buildings on both side should participate in a façade improvement plan that would give sense of place for the district. At present the ownership of the buildings on the south side of the street is under one individual and the complex on the north side of the street is owned by a non profit corporation. Working together to create a common design theme would not be very difficult.

Marchesano Goals

Goal 1: Create Committee for Marchesano

Quarter 1 2006 | Price: n/a | SWIFTT

Create a five person committee to oversee the objectives of the Marchesano Business District.

Goal 2: Acquire and demolish the building and house at the corner of South Main and Marchesano.

Quarter 2 2008 | Price: \$300,000 | City of Rockford & RRDC

The purpose would be to open up the view of the Marchesano District to traffic on South Main St. The existing Hispanic restaurant should be relocated in the proposed expansion of the nearby building.

Goal 3: Build out the building owned by Rock River Development Corporation towards South Main Street.

Quarter 3 2008 | Price: \$200,000 | RRDC/RRDC

This would bring the commercial stores closer to the traffic of South Main Street and draw more people to turn down Marchesano to see what else is in the District.

Goal 4: Attract larger retail stores into the former One Stop and the Jumpin' Jack's locations.

Quarter 2 2007 | Price: n/a | RRDC and other property owners

Increased retail development would secure the identity of the area as a local retail center that serves the local population. With a substantial amount of retail development in the area, residents of new housing subdivisions could be attracted to District.

Goal 5: Create Identity for Marchesano

Quarter 2 2006 | Price: \$4,000 | Marchesano Business owners/ Business owners and a local architect

Gather business owners to discuss what sort of image the Marchesano Business District should have. The image should encompass a name, façade improvement, event planning, and marketing. They should work with an architect to create renderings of what they want.

Goal 6: Businesses should participate in joint promotion opportunities.

Quarter 2 2006 | Price: \$1,000 | Marchesano Businesses/ SWIFTT will create opportunities.
Businesses should work together to promote the district as a whole. SWIFTT should create opportunities for business owners to accomplish this.

Cunningham

Description

Cunningham Business District consists of several storefronts and one anchor business, Maria's Italian Restaurant. Our approach will be to improve the physical area surrounding these businesses and provide assistance to the businesses themselves. When visiting this area, the first thing that strikes visitors is the poor condition of the residential buildings in the area. Furthermore several commercial structures are vacant, with at least two in need of demolition.

By addressing the residential properties in the area, the Cunningham Business District will become more successful by shedding the negative perception of the neighborhood. The second part of our effort should be to provide financial assistance to the businesses to improve the exterior and interior of their businesses. This too will make the area more attractive to visitors.

The third thrust of our plan is to provide marketing assistance to the business owners and encourage new businesses on the street. The District needs to grow in the number of businesses to solidify it as a true business district in the eyes of the community.

Cunningham Goals

Goal 1: Improve the image of businesses on Cunningham.

2005—2006 | Price: \$75,000 | City of Rockford & Business Owners/ Contractors

The commercial buildings require extensive exterior work to encourage not only more customers but also visitors to the area. The City now has a program to work with business owners.

Goal 2: Improve housing in the neighborhood to encourage visitors to the businesses.

When | Price: ? | Who will pay for it/ complete work

This street has a variety of housing needs ranging from housing rehab to demolition. The City of Rockford should be aggressive in the acquisition of deteriorated houses.

Goal 3: Remove the vacant grocery store and Boxing Club in the 600 block of Cunningham.

2006 | Price: ? | City of Rockford/ Contractors

The removal of these two buildings would facilitate significant new construction of residential housing or commercial development at this location. This residential/commercial development would create a more attractive entrance into the Cunningham Business District.

Goal 4: Study the demand for commercial development for Cunningham

When | Price: \$4,000 | Who will pay for it/ complete work

There are several buildings that were formerly used for business that have been boarded up or being used for residential use. The question the community has is whether they should return to commercial use.

Goal 5: Business Assistance should be provided to existing/future business in the District

When | Unknown | Who will pay: City of Rockford | Complete work: City of Rockford & SWIFTT

With the physical improvement, efforts should be made to increase the ability of the businesses to attain greater profits and employ more people. Efforts should be made to recruit new businesses to business space that is under utilized at this time. Assistance should take the form of low interest loans, grants, and technical assistance.

Economic Development Strategies

After studying the area, several observations of the economic status of the area become very important.

1. With a few exceptions, the only visible businesses in the area are retail-based.
2. Service based businesses, which typically pay higher wages, are difficult to identify.
3. Most new business start-up ideas of minority entrepreneurs are retail based.
4. Many businesses are focused on the customer base of those within either SW Rockford or West Rockford. Furthermore, they limit themselves to a particular ethnic population.

The root cause of this is as follows:

1. There is a lack of a support system that would assist people with business ideas. People therefore drift from more complex business to ideas that appear to be easier to launch such as retail.
2. A preconception that banks will not loan them the funding they need. This eliminates many of their ideas, leaving them with business ideas that can be started with levels of capital they feel they can raise on their own.
3. There is no effort to identify people with ideas that could lead to increases in employment. There are ideas in the minds of residents, both good and bad, that are not being researched because people don't know where to start.

The strategy to address these issues:

1. Encourage businesses to reach out to other market segments rather than the population in the immediate area.
2. Work with businesses to make their business and marketing more friendly to people of other ethnic backgrounds.
3. Market business planning and assistance to residential homes in the area in ways that will encourage potential entrepreneurs to become self-employed business owners.
4. Sponsor workshops to help existing businesses expand or improve their business.
5. Encourage various business resources to participate in joint advertising efforts that will be targeted to the populations of South Rockford. This would include advertisements in Spanish and English and illustrations showing people of different ethnic backgrounds in the marketing materials.

Economic Goals

Goal 1: Create a neighborhood based resource center that will provide assistance to local entrepreneurs.

2006 | Price: \$90,000 | Who will pay? City of Rockford (HS) | Operated by SWIFTT

SWIFTT should continue to pursue their Urban Technical Assistance Center that will provide consulting, business planning, and other services to increase the success of local business owners.

Special Target Area

Spanish speaking staff will be required to assist those who are more comfortable speaking Spanish.

Goal 2: A marketing plan should be launched to attract those potential entrepreneurs with viable ideas.

Quarter 2 2006 | Price: \$3,000 | SWIFTT

This marketing plan should encourage people to visit the SWIFTT Urban Technical Assistance Center or seminars hosted by SWIFTT and their partners. Materials would be printed in Spanish/English and promote other resources beyond SWIFTT. The idea would be to demonstrate that there is a great deal of support for entrepreneurs.

Goal 3: Partnerships should be forged between SWIFTT and other business resources.

Quarter 2 2006 | Price: n/a | SWIFTT

SWIFTT should act as a marketing and outreach arm of organizations such as SCORE, The Edge, Rock Valley College, the City of Rockford, and local banks. SWIFTT needs to build confidence of local residents in their ability to work with these resources to start or expand their business.

Goal 4: The City of Rockford should be supportive of business start-ups involving residents who live in the South Main Target Area.

2006–2009 | Price: \$200,000 (loans) \$50,000 (grants) | City of Rockford

The City should continue to offer loan products that will help local residents who wish to start up their own business. The business itself may or may not be located within the South Main Target Area due to available space. The key to improving the economic status of the target area is to promote an increase in individual household income.

Special Target Area

South Main Street/ Barber-Colman (Option A)

Hendricks Plan

In 2004, the City of Rockford hired the Hendricks Group to create a master plan for revitalizing the Barber-Colman complex. The Hendricks Group released their plan in late 2004, calling for a focus on education as the major tenant for the complex. A variety of other uses would be assembled around this main anchor tenant. Their proposal for areas beyond the actual Center for Excellence building rely heavily on re-routing Illinois Rt. 2 from a section of South Main and following a path close to Rock Street and then reconnect with South Main once past the Kent Creek. This a very controversial plan due to the involvement of the State of Illinois and the idea of redesigning South Main Street into a lower traffic street with on street parking.

Our plan has two possible scenarios: The Hendricks Plan and the Immigrant Landing Proposal. The choice of plans rest mainly on whether the City of Rockford chooses to pursue the realignment of South Main Street and is successful, then the Hendricks plan becomes the leading plan, with only limited ideas coming from the Immigrant Landing plan. However, if the realignment of Rt. 2 fails for any reason, then the Immigrant Landing Proposal will be the most likely plan for the Barber-Colman complex. It will be easy for the Hendricks' "Center for Excellence" component to fit into the Immigrant Landing plan.

Special Target Area

Special Target Area

South Main Street/ Barber-Colman (Option B)

Due to the complications of implementing the Hendricks Plan, a plan B has been formulated if the Hendricks plan becomes infeasible. Plan B will be referred to as Immigrant Landing.

Immigrant Landing

South West Rockford has always been a main starting point to different immigrant groups that arrived in Rockford since it was founded. Our plan is to transform the area known as the Barber-Colman complex, into a bustling destination point for visitors and local residents seeking to entertain visitors. We are seeking to create an intriguing mix of restaurants, stores, residential and offices. These businesses will be made to complement the efforts to create a park and green space along the Rock River directly east of the proposed development.

The project would be designed with a major anchor of a large restaurant and several reception halls in the existing building at the South East Corner of Loomis and Rock Street. The remainder of the development would be built along Loomis, Rock, and Montague Street. This development will consist of traditional storefronts with residential and office development on the second story. Each strip of retail development would be focused on a different ethnic theme. Each ethnic district would contain certain common types of businesses such as restaurants and gift shops. In addition to these constants, additional types of stores will be dispersed throughout the overall development due to the fact that only one of such store can be supported in this development. An example would be a bookstore.

Parking for visitors will be located behind the Immigrant Landing buildings. They will appear very open and attractive from the major streets of South Main and Morgan Street. They will be easy to pull in and find parking. There will be a parking fee for the lots to generate money for the operation of the Landing.

The History

Each area would have kiosk that would explain how that ethnic group migrated to Rockford. There would also be information about the Barber-Colman company, the Water Power District, and the industry of South West Rockford. There would be a key role played by the Ethnic Heritage Museum to play in the Immigrant Landing. They would be asked to turn their existing building into a replica of how the house would have appeared years ago. The Museum itself would be relocated to a space within the new buildings of the Immigrant Landing. They would provide visitors with information about nearby attractions such as their current building, Graham Ginestra House, and the Tinker Swiss Cottage.

Each area will have the following:

1. One to two restaurants/bars
2. A gift store carrying merchandise from the country that street represents.
3. A clothing store focused on the ethnic theme of the street.

Additional stores that will be dispersed in the area

1. Book store
2. Coffee shop
3. Bakery
4. Nightclub
5. Small offices
6. Rockford tourist shop
7. Art Store/ Gallery
8. Offices

In the large building

1. Reception halls
2. Night club
3. Large restaurant
4. Offices

Special Target Area

South Rockford Neighborhood Action Plan

Block By Block

SWIFTT

Residential

Market rate apartments will be developed above the stores of Immigrant Landing. They will have garages that will be attached to the rear of the buildings, with stairways up to their apartments. The apartments will range in price and size to provide a variety of options.

Street Access

All streets would be restricted to traffic after 10:00 AM, allowing delivery trucks to make deliveries in the morning hours. Deliveries after 10:00 AM would be through the parking areas located directly behind the stores. Street entrances would have folding barriers that would visually block the entrance to visitor vehicles. Emergency vehicles would be able to enter at any time by simply driving over the barriers. This arrangement would allow for pedestrian traffic to use the streets as a means of moving through Immigrant Landing.

Street Design

The streets will be replaced with either cobblestone or with brick imprinted asphalt. Cobblestone currently exists beneath the existing road surface. It has not been determined if that brick surface can be restored. The street décor will be that of a river dock, tying into the presence of the Rock River. A variety of decorations in the street design will give visitors the impression they are in a river front business district.

Security

Using a combination of police and private security, the development will have more than adequate patrols. Private security will be friendly sources of information and assistance to the visitors to Immigrant Landing. They will also be equipped to quickly contact emergency services if the need arises. The area will have a Rockford Police officer assigned to the area in the evenings, with additional officers scheduled as needed. Security cameras will be monitored 24 hours a day by the private security company, further ensuring safety.

Marketing

Why should people come?

The area will be marketed as a unique place to bring friends and family visiting from a distance. It will be an alternative to the restaurants located on East State street, which are present in most other cities. The gift shops will carry authentic merchandise imported from that particular country. They will focus on items that are collectable and that the country is well known for.

Immigrant Landing will be marketed heavily to hotel guest and to those groups inquiring about scheduling conferences or events. The reception halls could host conferences during the day or week nights when the demand for facility is low. The setting created by the Immigrant Landing could be a great selling point. The Rockford Mass Transit will provide a route from the hotel district to the Landing that will end at midnight. Taxi service would handle transportation for people until the district officially closes.

Special Target Area

Special Target Area South Main Street/ Barber-Colman

Attraction of Businesses

Regardless of which development plan is selected for the Barber-Colman Area, one of the major obstacles is the attraction of the desired businesses to the location. One solution is to attract chain stores first and capitalize on their name recognition. The pluses of these businesses are their ability to move quickly, take financial risk, and the popularity of their name. The minuses are that these chains are most likely in every other American city. For our needs, having the well established name could be a hindrance because we are seeking something unique. The second minus would be that in a rush to fill up spaces with chain stores, it will be difficult for local entrepreneurs to enter into the marketplace and compete with these corporate giants.

Our development requires an aggressive approach to recruitment and start-up of businesses in the Barber-Colman development. Currently, only the Rockford Local Development Corporation is in the business of recruiting businesses. We need to have an organization that can take the time and energy to work with local entrepreneurs to ensure their entry into the Barber-Colman Development and succeed. These responsibilities should be given to the SWIFTT organization. With the participation of other economic assistance agencies, this effort could produce numerous tenants for the Barber-Colman Development.

Major Changes In The Future

There are other important developments planned or proposed for the future that will impact the Barber-Colman complex. The first is the desires and plans by the Illinois Department of Transportation to remove buildings between South Main and the Rock River. The effect of this will be the creation of a very scenic parkway traveling up South Main Street. This change will positively impact the attractiveness of the Target Area. Furthermore, the planned development of new condominiums will demonstrate that market rate housing is a viable option in South Rockford.

The Morgan Street Bridge reconstruction project will provide a beautiful bridge and entrance to South Rockford, making visitors more confident in visiting the area. The bridge will be a grand design, providing a dramatic entry to the Barber-Colman area.

The current administration has voiced their desire to bring passenger rail service right to heart of Downtown. Early indications is the site of the passenger depot would be along South Main, just north of the Barber-Colman complex. This mode of transportation would spur additional commercial growth such as hotel, convention center, and retail development in and around the passenger depot. This would open up the concept of people visiting Rockford by rail, utilizing the hotel and meeting facilities in close proximity to the Barber-Colman complex. This would be a great economic plus to the efforts to develop the Barber-Colman complex and area surrounding it.

Our Vision

South West Rockford will become a high profile tourist area that offers ethnic and historic attractions and dining. During the summer months, people will visit SW Rockford for several neighborhood festivals that promote what is good in our neighborhoods.

Museums

Description

There are currently three museums in SW Rockford. Tinker Swiss Cottage is a well established museum with full-time staff. Ethnic Heritage Museum is an established museum that has a volunteer staff and covers the history of several ethnicities. A third museum, Graham Ginestra, is at struggling to function as a museum.

All three museums are concerned about the need for more visitors and operational funding. These museums have the potential for becoming the main attraction for drawing visitors to SW Rockford. When looking at SW from a marketing perspective, these tourist attractions will be needed as the materials point to the assets of our neighborhood. It is in the best interest of the community to see these museums increase in popularity and resources.

In addition to the improvement and promotion of these facilities, each museum should build upon their existing events and create new ones. Festivals will draw more people into the area, allowing them to see the good side of South West Rockford. This would also bring more money into the area and provide more funding for our non profits.

Visitor and Tourism Goals

Goal 1: Increase the comfort level for visitors to come to south main street by addressing security/physical environment issues.

Quarter 4 2006 | Price: \$1,500 | Heritage Committee/South Main Businesses/SWIFTT

Working with the South Main Business owners, the museum committee should work to address the perception of visitors with respect to safety and attractiveness of the area around the museums. In particular, South Main and Short Kent Street should be beautified. SWIFTT will work with the South Main business owners to raise money to install planters, hanging baskets, and improve landscaping of public property. Other more expensive ideas will also be pursued such as private security patrols, security cameras, and a police substation.

Goal 2: Removal or renovation of the Knitting Factory on Kent Street

Quarter 2 2008 | Price: \$25,000 | South Main Businesses/ SWIFTT

This building was once home to the Nelson Knitting Factory and has been vacant since 1999. The property lacks parking and would difficult if not impossible to operate the facility for any use in the future unless new parking was established. Removal would eliminate an eyesore and allow the Tinker Swiss Cottage to recreate the original grounds of the property.

Goal 4: A strong marketing campaign is needed to draw people to SW Rockford.

Quarter 2 2006 | Price: \$1,500 | South Main Businesses/ SWIFTT

SW Rockford needs to be marketed as a destination spot for those interested in historic areas of the city and ethnic foods. A portion of the plan should include a way to capitalize on the bike path that will approach Tinker Swiss Cottage and could extend to Ethnic Heritage Museum and Graham Ginestra House. The effort should also include joining efforts with local businesses on South Main Street. SWIFTT will work to design, fund, and print 5,000 brochures promoting South Rockford in 2006.

Goal 5: Strengthen the museums of South Rockford to increase the number of visitors/ tourist coming to the area.

Quarter 4 2006 | Price: \$2,000 | Ethnic Heritage/Graham Ginestra/ SWIFTT

The area's three museums could greatly increase outside visitors to the area by improving each entity and their drawing power. This would directly benefit other efforts to improve the area.

Goal 6: Increased collaboration between museums

Quarter 2 2006 | Price: N/A | Heritage Committee

There are several events that could become quite significant in attracting people from outside of the area. These events are: Summer Festival, Music Festival, and Ice Cream Social.

Goal 8: Develop one event a year that would involve the museums and the community.

Quarter 4 2006 | Price: \$1,500 | South Main Businesses/SWIFTT

South Rockford lacks a large community event that would celebrate all the ethnic groups of the area. The event could focus on past, present, and the future of South Rockford.

Goal 9: Create plan to restore the former Capital Theater building to a major asset for South Rockford.

Quarter 4 2008 | Price: \$10,000 | South Main Businesses/SWIFTT

SWIFTT and the South Main Businesses will develop a plan to renovate the Capital Theater building. This activity will most likely include securing funds for a consultant to complete a study on reuse of the building and how financing could be structured to accomplish this.

Our goals for the housing of the Target Area are . . .

- ◆ Preserve quality housing stock
- ◆ Create limited areas of new market rate housing
- ◆ Increase the amount of quality housing while maintaining affordability by those who currently live in the neighborhood

Sub Areas

- South of Montague
Bordered by West Street, Marchesano Dr., South Main, and Montague Street.
- Booker Washington Area
Bordered by South Winnebago, Montague Street, South Main, and Illinois Central Railway
- Cunningham
Bordered by South Winnebago, Illinois Central Railway, Corbin, and Montague St.

Strategy

Based upon our early assessment of the area, the housing stock is very aged with the exception of new houses built through City of Rockford programs in recent years. The houses themselves lack any real common design theme or appearance. However, we know our present and future amounts of funding are limited. We do not have the luxury of planning all new housing for this area. Therefore, we are using a strategy that makes the best of our situation and provides the largest gain for the requested public investment.

Our strategy calls for focusing new construction dollars in areas where open space already exist and focusing renovation efforts around these new construction area.

The Main Component

The City of Rockford has used the West Side Alive program effectively for the past ten years. In the area of Park Place, they focused their efforts in one set area, providing a significant area of newly built homes. We will use the same approach in the South Main Target Area; however we hope to leverage additional housing beyond the West Side Alive Program. We have two other sources to draw upon: Non profits and the private sector. Both of these entities have produced new construction housing in our area in recent years.

Aggressive Housing Areas

Our plan calls for focusing on areas that we refer to as Aggressive Housing Areas. These areas have significant amounts of open space for new construction housing. These areas can and will be expanded upon through acquisition of adjacent deteriorated houses or buildings. Our plans call for limited acquisition due to the cost associated with the process. However, there are areas where by acquiring a limited number of surrounding properties, a much greater impact will be realized. The Aggressive Areas will then be the location of new construction residential housing. In some cases the new construction could include limited commercial.

Passive Housing Areas

These areas surround the Aggressive Housing Areas and are selected based upon their ability to assist the Aggressive Housing activity. In these areas of existing older housing, we hope to stabilize the housing stock and experience a visible improvement. Our approach in this area is to blanket the property owners in the area with

Goals Housing

information material regarding the housing rehab programs. Door to door efforts will be used to discuss the benefits of the programs and to encourage the improvements of their properties.

In addition to the rehabbing of properties, the City will work to acquire properties in the passive areas as they become available. Those properties will be developed in a way that compliments the nearby Aggressive Areas. New houses in the passive areas will be designed to match the appearance of the nearest Aggressive Area.

Funding for the City's Housing Rehab Programs is limited, even within the Target Area. Therefore we have to focus the program around our Aggressive areas. We will further target the marketing of these programs more by focusing around Aggressive Areas that are most likely to be developed.

Each Aggressive and Passive area will be discussed in the appropriate sub area text.

Our goals for the housing of the Target Area are . . .

- ◆ Preserve quality housing stock
- ◆ Create limited areas of new market rate housing
- ◆ Increase the amount of quality housing while maintaining affordability by those who currently live in the neighborhood

Sub Areas

- Mandeville South
Bordered by West Street, Marchesano Dr., South Main, and Montague Street.
- Mandeville North
Bordered by South Winnebago, Montague Street, South Main, and Illinois Central Railway
- Cunningham
Bordered by South Winnebago, Illinois Central Railway, Corbin, and Montague St.

Mandeville South

Description

This area is characterized by smaller single family houses, with some two story houses on Island Avenue and Salter St. The largest threat to this area is obsolete housing styles. Although the houses on Illinois Avenue appear rather modern, the remainder of the housing styles in the St. Elizabeth area is outdated. Outdated housing styles could decrease the demand by homeowners for this area. This lack of attractiveness has already led to large scale conversion from homeowner to rental.

There is no feasible way to eradicate all of the deteriorated and outdated housing styles within this area. Therefore the plan calls for removal of the deteriorated housing stock while looking for reinvestment in the remaining homes. This area needs to take advantage of the wide variety of housing styles while adding new housing to the area. There are many examples of private investments into the cosmetic appearance of houses in the neighborhood. This increase in curb appeal is crucial as we encourage homeownership in the future.

Significant stabilization of this area can occur with the promotion and participation in the City of Rockford's Home Improvement programs. With the proper improvement to the housing in this area, the neighborhood could remain affordable for the residents in the area and still offer quality housing.

The obsolete styles will hold the area back from significant gains in pricing in years to come. However with removal of deteriorated housing and an increase in home improvements, this neighborhood could experience modest increases in value in the future. This would do well to preserve an element of affordable housing for the overall South West quadrant of the city.

With plans for the New Zion Church on Salter Avenue expanding, there is some potential for new houses to be built on Salter Avenue. Utilizing existing vacant lots and additional lots caused by removing deteriorated structures, new houses could be added to the street. This could also happen on Heath Street.

Mandeville South Goals

Goal 1: Form a Mandeville South Improvement Committee

Quarter 1 2006 | Price: n/a | Who will pay? n/a | Operated by City of Rockford

This committee will serve as the overseer of improvements and developments in the Mandeville South Area. The committee will serve as a liaison between improvement efforts of the City of Rockford, Non Profits, and neighborhood residents. SWIFTT will work to form the committee and provide ongoing support.

Goal 2: Removal of deteriorated housing on South Main and 300 block of Knowlton.

Quarter 2006-08 | Price: \$300,000 | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by City of Rockford

This housing stock has deteriorated significantly over the years and is outside of the range of our renovation abilities. The location is key because of the current and future development on the opposite side of the street on South Main. The houses on Knowlton are in close proximity to Martin Luther King, Jr. School and several past West Side Alive homes on Knowlton.

Goal 3: Remove houses throughout the neighborhood that are beyond repair.

Quarter 2006-08 | Price: \$10,000/house | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by City of Rockford

There are houses within this area that should be removed however they may not be part of any large scale redevelopment project.

Goal 4: Build new single family houses on buildable vacant lots.

Quarter 2008 | Price: \$50,000 subsidy per house | Who will pay? City of Rockford/ banks/ developers/ IHDA | Operated by City of Rockford/CCS, Inc./ Hands that Help, Inc./Redline Developers

To better improve the neighborhood, we should build new houses on vacant lots to complete the neighborhood.

Goal 5: Bring residents and developers together to design the South Main and Knowlton

Quarter 3 2006 | Price: \$0 | Who will pay? N/A | Operated by SWIFTT

With the removal of the deteriorated buildings in this area, neighborhood residents should work with non profit developers such as CCS, Inc. to formulate the proper development and design for the Aggressive Area.

Goal 6: Launch a campaign to create neighborhood pride

Quarter 2 2006 | Price: \$4,000 | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by SWIFTT

Long time residents in the Mandeville South area feel that there are many small things that can be done to improve the neighborhood. Most of these come down to simply having pride in your property and the neighborhood. The Mandeville Improvement Committee will work with SWIFTT to develop and distribute literature, remain active on code enforcement, and organize neighborhood improvement projects.

Goal 7: Encouragement of homeowner home improvement

Quarter 2 2006 | Price: TBD | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by City of Rockford/ SWIFTT

There are private and public programs that can assist property owners with their property. A marketing plan should be designed to educate the residents of the area about these programs.

South of Montague Priority List*Deteriorated Housing List*

1. 218 Lane Street
2. Corner of S. Main and Lane (blue house)
3. 409 Salter Avenue
4. 515 Salter Avenue
5. 324 Heath Street
6. 411 Lincoln
7. 630 Island
8. 614 Island
9. 529 Indiana
10. 1401 S. Main
11. 1421 S. Main
12. 1425 S. Main
13. 1427 S. Main
14. 1429 S. Main
15. 1435 S. Main

AggressiveSalter Avenue

In this neighborhood, the area that will see aggressive redevelopment will be the area surrounding New Zion Church on Salter Avenue. This area will be developed by a non profit organized by New Zion Baptist Church.

The church's plan focuses on expanding their church and creating a social service center for the neighborhood. There will be limited housing developed in conjunction with this development.

South Main and Knowlton

This area overlooks the new Gray's Grocery Store and is adjacent to King School. The current housing stock is deteriorated to the point that it is being boarded up and is a deterrent to future development. This Aggressive area is different than the other areas because it calls for the removal of a substantial amount of buildings and has no open space to begin with.

Mandeville North AreaDescription

This housing area is the heart of the Hispanic area of South West Rockford. You will find the highest concentration of Hispanic families within this housing area. The housing suffers from either small housing or large single family houses that have been carved up into apartments. Housing size, design, and use varies greatly in the area. Areas of interest include West Street with established brick two family structures on the east side of the street. This seems to offer a foundation for a revitalization of West Street in the 1100 block.

The intersection of Loomis and Court offers an opportunity for creating a well designed housing development that may include row houses or single family detached. The challenge will be to create it for the Hispanic market which has already laid claim to the area. Great attention should be given to the amenities and design that this market would demand.

Over time, the Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum has been improving their property and making their location an exciting attraction for visitor coming to South West Rockford. There will be efforts to address the former Nelson Knitting building that is currently blight on Kent Street. When this is done, new construction housing could be developed on Kent Street and on the 1000 block of Church Street.

Mandeville North Area Goals**Goal 1: Form a Mandeville North Improvement Committee**

Quarter 1 2006 | Price: n/a | Who will pay? n/a | Operated by SWIFTT

This committee will serve as the overseer of improvements and developments in the Mandeville North Area. The committee will serve as a liaison between improvement efforts of the City of Rockford, Non Profits, and neighborhood residents. SWIFTT will work to form the committee and provide ongoing support.

Goals

Neighborhood/Housing

South Rockford

Block By Block

SWIFTT

Goal 2: Create a development plan focused on residential construction for the intersection of Court Street and Loomis Street.

Quarter 1 2007 | Price: \$2,000| Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by City of Rockford/SWIFTT CCS, Inc./Redline Developers

This area has been slowly cleared of deteriorated housing leaving contiguous parcels suitable for new construction housing. The area is already seeing new residential construction. A coordinated effort is now needed that uses a uniform design throughout the new homes and that can be easily adopted by nearby existing houses. During this planning process efforts should be made to acquire additional parcels that are adjacent to City owned property in this area.

Goal 3: Create housing plan for Short Kent Street to take advantage of the removal of the Nelson Knitting Building

Quarter 3 2006 | Price: \$100,000| Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by City of Rockford/SWIFTT/CCS, Inc.

With the removal of the Nelson Knitting Building, the view from houses built on the South side of Short Kent will overlook the restored grounds of the Tinker Swiss Cottage, the Kent Creek Area, and the Park District owned north bank area. This area includes the 1000 block of Church Street.

Goal 4: Removal of substandard properties

Quarter 2006-08 | Price: \$10,000| Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by City of Rockford

We will include a list of properties here that do not appear to be easily rehabbed. It may be that in the future a private owner would try to rehabilitate the property, however in the absence of a willing party, these prosperities should be removed to allow the neighborhood to rebound.

Goal 5: Launch a campaign to create neighborhood pride

Quarter 3 2006 | Price: \$4,000| Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by SWIFTT

Long time residents in the Mandeville South area feel that there are many small things that can be done to improve the neighborhood. Most of these come down to simply having pride in your property and the neighborhood. The Mandeville Improvement Committee will work with SWIFTT to develop and distribute literature, remain active on code enforcement, and organize neighborhood improvement projects.

Goal 6: Encouragement of home owner home improvement

Quarter 2 2006 | Price: \$ 1,000| Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by City of Rockford

There are private and public programs that can assist property owners with their property. A marketing plan should be designed to educate the residents of the area about these programs.

Mandeville North Area Priority List

Deteriorated Housing

List

1. 1115 Court Street
2. 1209 Court Street
3. 1231 Court Street (too close together)
4. 1233 Church Street
5. 1206 Church Street

Aggressive

Loomis and Court Street

This open space is located one block east of the recently rebuilt Winnebago Street with several vacant lots facing on Winnebago Street. A new house was built one block to the north of the intersection. The plan would call for a limited amount of building acquisition on the west side of Court Street in the 1200 block.

Short Kent Street

This area has a considerable amount of open space on the corner of Kent Street and Church, with additional open space on the east side of Church Street in the 1000 block. A key point about this Aggressive area is the Nelson Knitting building which appears to have no possible use due to the lack of parking. The building occupies what was once a significant portion of the original grounds of the Tinker Swiss Cottage.

Cunningham Area

Description

This area has rather large two story houses with a mix of small ranch styles. The area is seeing investment by landlords in the way of new siding and general repairs. These are both signs of investor confidence in the area's potential.

With a new street installed at Cunningham, the neighborhood is showing new signs of investment. Ferguson in particular is seeing houses being renovated. There is an open area on the corner of Winnebago and Cunningham that is attractive to development, either residential or commercial. There is also opportunity at the corner of Blake and Winnebago also.

Cunningham Area Housing Goals

Goal 1: Form a Cunningham Improvement Committee

Quarter 1 2006 | Price: n/a | Who will pay? N/A | Operated by SWIFTT

This committee will serve as the overseer of improvements and developments in the Cunningham Area. The committee will serve as a liaison between improvement efforts of the City of Rockford, Non Profits, and neighborhood residents. SWIFTT will work to form the committee and provide ongoing support.

Goal 2: Launch a campaign to create neighborhood pride

Quarter 2 2006 | Price: \$1,000 | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by SWIFTT

Long time residents in the Cunningham area feel that there are many small things that can be done to improve the neighborhood. Most of these come down to simply having pride in your property and the neighborhood. The Cunningham Improvement Committee will work with SWIFTT to develop and distribute literature, remain active on code enforcement, and organize neighborhood improvement projects.

Goal 3: Reduce gang activity in neighborhood

Quarter 1 2007 | Price: \$ 2,000 | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by SWIFTT/Cease Fire/Rockford Police Dept.

The impact of gang activity has resulted in a lack of interest in private investment in the area. The immediate problem is directly linked to young teenage gang members living in the neighborhood. Parents need to be made aware that their sons or daughters may be involved in gang activity. They should also be informed about how to intervene to remove them from the activity.

Goal 4: Removal of substandard properties

Quarter 2006-08 | Price: \$200,000 | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by City of Rockford

We will include a list of properties here that do not appear to be easily rehabbed. It may be that in the future a private owner would try to rehabilitate the property; however in the absence of a willing party, these prosperities should be removed to allow the neighborhood to rebound.

Goal 5: Encouragement of homeowner home improvement

Quarter 3 2006 | Price: \$1,000 | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by City of Rockford/SWIFTT

There are private and public programs that can assist property owners with their property. A marketing plan should be designed to educate the residents of the area about these programs.

Goals

Neighborhood/Housing

South Rockford

Block By Block

SWIFTT

Cunningham Area Priority List

Deteriorated Housing List

1. 626 Kent Street
2. 627 Boxing Club/grocery building on Cunningham
3. 703 Cunningham
4. Houghton Street (last house on corner)

Aggressive

Winnebago and Cunningham

This open space could be the eastern anchor of Cunningham. With somewhat ambitious acquisition of houses on the south side of Cunningham, the entrance to this street could be not only attractive, but beneficial to the remainder of neighborhood. Just west of this Aggressive Area are three businesses that are currently hampered by the appearance of this entrance into the neighborhood.

New housing could make a significant impact for the neighborhood. The location may be attractive to those wishing to live adjacent to the west side downtown, allowing for more market rate housing to be built.

Blake and Winnebago

This area has only two structures standing in the way of a large open space. The first is the remains of a small gas station and the second is a two family building that appears to be in good shape. This area is in very close proximity to the other Aggressive Area to the north.

Passive

Cunningham

This passive area is critical to the success of the Cunningham aggressive area. Housing in this area will improve through private investment and limited City acquisition when the opportunity presents itself. The end result will be the return of Cunningham Street to that of an actual neighborhood business district.

Blake

This passive area will compliment the work on Cunningham and also improve the appearance to those traveling on Winnebago.

Neighborhoods go beyond housing; they encompass people, activity, and way of life for the residents who live in them. Addressing problem properties will not be enough to change the neighborhood. Improving housing will need the support of neighborhood residents to have the maximum affect. Without the neighborhood gaining a sense of overall improvement, dollars spent on improving housing will quickly be lost to a declining neighborhood.

In speaking with longtime residents, one important element that is missing is a general sense of pride in the neighborhood. They point out that people walk by garbage in front of their house, without picking it up. Others talk about overgrown bushes and trees that need to be trimmed or removed. Some trees grow over the public sidewalks, making it difficult to walk in the neighborhood. When taken as a whole, these things add up to a major obstacle in the neighborhood.

This problem can be addressed through bringing like minded residents together and influencing their neighbors. Neighborhood clean-ups, block parties, and neighborhood property awards are examples of activity that would help bring pride back to the neighborhood residents. The starting point will be to form the five person committees discussed in the housing section. Using these leaders as a starting point, efforts will be made to develop block captains for each street in the sub areas. The early block captains will come from the members of the committee themselves. In time, additional leaders will be recruited so that the total number of leaders in each area will grow to about ten to fifteen.

Block Level Leadership Goals

Goal 1: Organize block groups on each street: Cunningham Area

2006 | Price: n/a | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by SWIFTT

Starting with Ferguson Street, each street will be approached to bring residents together. Repeated door knocking will be required to establish a relationship with the residents and to identify potential leaders.

Goal 2: Organize block groups on each street: Mandeville North Area

2007 | Price: n/a | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by SWIFTT

There are three main streets in the area that will be focused on: Winnebago, Court, and Church Street. Each street will be approached to bring residents together. Repeated door knocking will be required to establish a relationship with the residents and to identify potential leaders.

Goal 3: Organize block groups on each street: Mandeville South Area

2006 | Price: n/a | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by SWIFTT

Lincoln and Illinois Avenues are the starting point in this area. Additional streets include Knowlton, Salter, Island, and Indiana. Each street will be approached to bring residents together. Repeated door knocking will be required to establish a relationship with the residents and to identify potential leaders.

Goal 4: Design and Implement Neighborhood Pride Program

2006 | Price: \$4,000 | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by SWIFTT

SWIFTT will design marketing materials to encourage people to maintain their properties. The program will consist of handouts, a section in the SWIFTT newsletter, and coaching of block captains and other neighborhood leaders.

Area Wide Leadership

Description

We have needs at three levels: block leaders, non profit leaders, and political

Block leaders need to be a conductor of information. They need to let City and County departments know what the needs are on their street and they need to relay news about what is happening in their area to their neighbors. Non profit staff and board members are given the important role of governing resources, both private and public to assist our areas. The better they operate the more improvement the target area will realize. Politicians serve as representatives of the people. Our citizens seem to avoid political participation, either as voters or holders of office. Politics or citizenship is what our country has been built on. Yet the target area has distanced them from the process.

The solution is to provide consulting, training, and information to these identified groups. SWIFTT can facilitate many of these activities by marketing their services and those of other organization to the target audience. There are a wide variety of resources in the Rockford area; however they are not being marketed into SW Rockford and specifically our target audience.

Area Wide Leadership Goals

Goal 1: Create and distribute marketing materials for the various leadership resources

Quarter 2 2006 | Price: \$750 | SWIFTT

These need to be handed out at public meetings, in public locations such as the library, and mailed to leaders who affect the target area.

Goal 2: Design workshops and seminars in the target area utilizing resource people from the Rockford Community

Quarter 2 2008 | Price: \$400 | SWIFTT

SWIFTT will work with other organizations to create seminars that can be held in or near the target area. SWIFTT would then take on the responsibility to market the seminars to the community.

Goals Infrastructure

Our goals for the infrastructure of the Target Area are . . .

Streets

1. Smooth street surfaces that look well maintained.
2. Curb and gutter for all streets.
3. Proper drainage that eliminates any pooling of storm water runoff.

Tree Trimming

1. Trees in the right-of-way will be pruned back and maintained in an attractive manner.
2. Light from street lights will be allowed to provide maximum illumination through properly maintained trees.

Street Improvements

The need for street improvements cannot be overstated. The area does not suffer from extremely deteriorated streets, however they are lacking in features now considered required in new areas of the city. Sidewalks are becoming nonexistent as they age over time. The original streets in the area were either equipped with either poorly designed curb and gutter, or no infrastructure at all. Compounding this problem has been the additions of new layers of paving material over the past century, decreasing or erasing any of the previous curb and gutter. In some areas, the new layers have become even with the top of the old curbing.

In some cases, the street surface is in poor condition. The current mode of operation is to allocate the elected alderman with a certain budget to allow for more local determination of what streets to improve and in what manner. This will be able to slowly improve the wards, however when looking specifically at the target area the focus of investment will come at a price to other areas. As we call for the alderman to spend their money in the South Main Target Area, the other areas of their ward will suffer from the lack of government investment.

Due to the need of concentrated spending, a special road referendum should be issued to propose an increase to the spending of money for infrastructure for this area. Specifically, the streets in the Mandeville North and South should be targeted. The Barber-Colman Development will also require infrastructure investments and should be grouped together with the other street needs of the South Main Target Area.

City infrastructure and the provision of city services are vital to improving a neighborhood. The key services provided by Public Works are: street paving, sidewalks, tree trimming, and street lighting. The most visible impact comes from the repaving of streets and installing proper sidewalks, curbs and gutters. Most of the streets in this area were installed decades ago and have seen upgrades in the past two decades in most cases. The biggest change has occurred with the City of Rockford focused their available funds to completely rebuild streets to include installing curb and gutter. The old system was to simply resurface streets, avoiding the expense of installing the curb and gutter. The street improvement process now moves slow, but yields high impact results. The aldermen for the two wards will continue to allocate street funds in the target area. Our plan calls for the continuation of this process, with the alderman increasing the spending in the target area whenever possible.

Tree trimming is another service that has a large impact on the neighborhood is tree trimming. As new sidewalks and curbs are installed, the appearance of trees will have help change the perception of South Rockford. Our plan calls for the three neighborhood committees to work with the Public Works Department to coordinate the trimming of trees in the area.

Street lighting is also important to perception and to public safety. Surveys of streets will be conducted by SWIFTT and neighborhood committees to determine the need for new service and proper maintenance of existing lights. Efforts to improve lighting will go a long way to making the community feel safe and visitors welcome when visiting at night.

Street Resurfacing Priorities

Knowlton	300-400 Block
Salter Ave.	300-600 Block
Island Ave.	400-600 Block
Court St.	1100-1200 Block
Church St.	1100-1200 Block

Street Improvement Goals

Goal 1: Continue to completely rebuild streets with curb and gutter in target area.

Quarter 2006-10 | Price: \$400,000 | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by City of Rockford
Neighborhood committees will work with the alderman of their ward to focus spending in their area of the target area.

Goal 2: Tree trimming services will be concentrated in the area.

Quarter 2006-10 | Price: \$ | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by City of Rockford
Neighborhood committees will work with Public Works to utilize the City's tree trimming service to improve the appearance of streets and to maximize the impact of street lighting.

Goal 3: Improve street lighting in the neighborhood.

Quarter 2006-10 | Price: ? | Who will pay? City of Rockford | Operated by City of Rockford
Neighborhood committees will create a report of needed street lighting to include locations for new installations and maintenance of existing lights.

If one was to look into the future of South Rockford, many things are possible. If you base the future on the activities described in the action plan, the future looks pretty bright

The Barber-Colman complex will become a tourist attraction, bringing both people from Rockford and visitors to a unique part of the city. Future development of the rail yards north of the target area will bring additional possibilities of tourist spending as hotels and additional retail developments occur.

With the development of new housing in numerous areas of the neighborhood and surroundings, new confidence would bring more people desiring homeownership into the community.

Efforts to assist start-up or business expansion would result in higher employment and a greater capture of wealth from outside of the South Rockford boundaries.

Cunningham would experience a rebirth of investment and new construction. This new found attraction of investment and business would pay dividends to the adjoining street as they too felt the benefit of the improvement of Cunningham.

Marchesano would finally realize its true potential as more people became aware of its location and stores. Modern façades would allow for commercial tenants to offer a wider variety of goods that would be in demand by the new influx of residents and visitors.

Cunningham, Mandeville South and North neighborhoods would see remodeled housing, well kept yards and neighbors who know each other. Boarded up houses would eventually be eliminated due to market pressures to either renovate or demolish to build new homes.

The Future

South Rockford Neighborhood Action Plan

Block By Block

SWIFTT

